

TWO more goals by Ian Pearson, who has established himself as one of the top strikers in the Rothmans Isthmian League, earned Wycombe Wanderers two useful points at Barking on Saturday. The Blues jump from fifth to third place as a result of this victory which was richly deserved.

Mayesbrook Park, Barking, is not the most attractive of places in the league at the best of times. In fact, when it is gloomy and raining it's certainly one of the places I'd least like to be on a Saturday afternoon.

Barking moved to their current ground three years ago and apart from establishing a flourishing clubhouse, it seems precious little has been done to the playing surface or the facilities for both players and spectators. The pitch must rank as one of the worst in the league while an inadequate stand on one side of the ground was all the fans had to shelter from the weather. Surely something must be done about the condition of the ground soon.

As soon as the ball was kicked it became obvious that the game would be something of a lottery. The heavily sanded pitch made

Barking 0, Wycombe Wanderers 2

REPORT BY STUART EARP

the ball bounce unpredictably which meant constructive play was exceedingly difficult.

Mistakes, it seemed, would be responsible for goals if any were forthcoming and sure enough, it was a Barking error that let in Pearson during the first half. Ian's second half goal was one of his best this season, however, and his all round contribution to the game was considerable.

Pearson, who now has the outstanding figure of 29 goals to his credit, has had his critics this season. But there

was no denying his work rate and finishing on Saturday. What's more, he combined more readily with his front runners as well as showing his full repertoire of dribbling skills — no mean feat on this ground.

If Ian was man of the match, Mick Holifield couldn't have been far behind him. Back to full fitness, Mick's aggressive running did much to put Wycombe in command. Gavin Fraser also did well in the unaccustomed position of left back, where he replaced Bob Davies, who was

getting married. Right back Paul Birdseye had his best game for weeks.

Wanderers' win was deserved in more ways than one. Apart from their footballing display, they had to overcome two injuries. Howard Kennedy limped off with damaged knee ligaments in the 20th minute and later Peter Cruse became no more than a passenger with an ankle injury.

Things looked ominous for the Blues in the first 10 minutes, however, when it seemed they were getting last Tuesday's Leatherhead performance out of their systems. Then a mistake by Barking full back Bob Makin gave them a boost after 18 minutes. Makin's back pass fell short and Pearson was on the chance in a flash to put Wanderers one up.

Two minutes later Kennedy took a knock and was replaced by Dylan Evans, Cruse moving back into midfield. The much maligned Dylan turned in a gutsy display and never stopped working for the rest of the game.

Wycombe continued to look dangerous against a shaky home back four and although Cruse struggled to find his form, Holifield made up for it by taking on defenders and sending over dangerous crosses. At the other end John Maskell, playing with an injured finger, looked suspect under the high ball.

Mistakes by both sides meant a frustrating second half for the spectators with Wycombe's passing well below normal standard. But Wanderers' second goal certainly brought the crowd to life.

It came after 61 minutes. The ball was played up to Howard Kettleborough who headed out to Holifield on the left. He beat one defender for pace and powered a long, deep cross into the box where Pearson launched himself to head past Nick Markwick in the home goal.

Two goals up with under half an hour to go, Wycombe relaxed a little and it needed a couple of fine saves from Maskell to keep out the home side who fought back well. Peter Burton and Key set up a chance for Dave Weights but Maskell blocked the shot at point blank range. Then in the 70th minute diminutive right back Graham Hayley crashed in a 30 yard drive that dipped viciously, but Maskell saved at the second attempt.

Cruse had to leave the field for repairs soon afterwards and while Wycombe were down to 10 men, Evans put Kettleborough clean through but instead of taking the chance himself, he waited for support and gave Barking the time to regroup.

Barking, who built up a steady stream of corners throughout the match (12 to Wycombe's two), were almost caught again after 83 minutes when Evans produced a great run from 20 yards inside his own half. Beating two men, he was only just wide with a shot past the post.

BARKING: N. Markwick; G. Hayley, K. Barrett, G. Twidell, R. Makin; D. Weights, A. Brothers, C. Ballard, L. Abrahams; B. Key, P. Burton. Sub R. Pitting (not used).

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell; P. Birdseye, K. Mead, A. Phillips, G. Fraser; H. Kennedy (sub. D. Evans 20 mins); J. Priestley, M. Holifield; I. Pearson, H. Kettleborough, P. Cruse.

Referee: C. Gregory (Woking).

Half-time: 0-1. **Goalscorer:** Pearson 2 (18, 61).

How they stand

ROTHMANS ISTHMIAN LEAGUE
DIVISION ONE
(up to and inc. 12/2/77)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	Pen	C	D
Dagenham	29	17	6	6	53	28	57	2	0	
Enfield	28	16	8	5	38	26	53	3	4	
Wycombe Wanderers	28	16	6	7	42	24	51	1	0	
Tilbury	30	14	8	8	40	34	50	6	4	
Leatherhead	27	15	3	9	46	28	48	2	0	
Walthamstow Ave.	27	14	3	10	43	34	45	8	0	
Hendon	28	13	5	10	41	34	44	4	0	
Leytonstone	27	11	8	8	42	37	41	6	4	
Tooting and Mitcham	27	11	6	10	51	47	39	7	0	
Hitchin Town	24	12	3	9	30	34	39	3	0	
Sutton United	27	11	5	11	33	36	38	1	0	
Slough Town	24	11	4	9	33	30	37	1	0	
Barking	29	11	4	14	37	42	37	3	0	
Bishop's Stortford	27	10	6	11	37	34	36	1	4	
Croydon	24	8	6	10	22	25	30	3	0	
Staines Town	20	8	5	7	19	18	29	2	0	
Southall	25	8	5	12	35	41	29	6	4	
Kingstonian	29	8	5	16	32	45	29	9	0	
Woking	28	7	6	15	34	48	27	2	0	
Hayes Town	26	8	3	15	29	46	27	1	4	
Dulwich Hamlet	25	4	6	15	27	43	18	1	4	
Ilford	25	3	5	17	13	49	14	8	0	

C — caution, 1pt. D — dismissal, 4pts.